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Group reports execution today of U.S. hostage

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP) — A terrorist group said today that it was executing William Buckley, a political officer at the U.S. Embassy who was kidnapped 18 months ago, Lebanon's leading independent newspaper reported.

The newspaper, *An-Nahar*, said that at 1 a.m. today (5 p.m. yesterday EDT) it received an envelope containing a statement by the terrorist group, Islamic Jihad, saying it would execute Mr. Buckley in retaliation for Israel's air raid this week on the Palestine Liberation Organization's headquarters in Tunisia.

It said the execution would take place as soon as the statement was published.

A Polaroid color photograph of Mr. Buckley was enclosed with the statement, the paper said.

In the picture, the kidnapped American looked pale and drawn and had a beard. He was wearing a gray track suit with yellow stripes across the chest. There was no indication when or where the photo was taken.

Mr. Buckley, 57, of Medford, Mass., was kidnapped March 16, 1984, outside his home. He has been in captivity the longest of the six American hostages who are believed held in Beirut.

Islamic Jihad, or Islamic Holy War — the underground terrorist group that claimed that it bombed the headquarters of U.S. Marines and French peacekeepers in Beirut, in October 1982 — has said it is

holding all six Americans, plus two Frenchmen and a British citizen.

The terrorists have demanded the release of 17 of their comrades convicted and imprisoned in Kuwait for the December 1983 terrorist bombings of the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait.

Three of the 17 have been sentenced to death by hanging. Kuwait has refused to release any of them.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Joe Reap said he had no

information on the report concerning Mr. Buckley. "I've checked. We have nothing on it. We are, of course, checking."

Mr. Buckley, a bachelor, became a Foreign Service officer in 1983 after 18 years as a civilian employee of the U.S. Army, having served in Washington and Vietnam. He was assigned to Beirut, his first State Department post, in September 1983.

The Islamic Jihad statement issued today said: "We are responsible

for the blood of Moslems in every part of the world and we understand that America and Israel are responsible for the killing of Moslems in Tunisia.

"Therefore, we declare that in revenge for the blood of our martyrs, we announce the execution of the resident American agent in the Middle East and the first political officer at the American Embassy in Beirut, William Buckley, right after the publication of this statement."